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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to combine the voices of advocates for a multicultural teacher education curriculum with the voices of advocates for the case study method in order to explore the possibilities of addressing multicultural issues in preservice teacher education coursework. To examine how preservice teachers make sense of diversity through discussion of a case study, a case was presented and discussed with 4 classes of 20 to 30 student teachers, organized into cooperative learning groups. The case, read aloud to the class, described a learning disabled child and contained contextual information regarding the child's cultural background. Preservice teachers recorded their reactions individually; cooperative groups created concept maps followed by role play based on the relationships of characters in the case. Data were derived from document analysis of pre- and post-case discussion reflections written by students in the class. The research concludes that discussion of a case with peers may provide an opportunity for preservice teachers to examine their beliefs, subjectivities, and biases and to understand how those subjectivities and biases affect how they perceive teaching and learning situations. This in turn may lead to a heightened sensitivity toward cultural diversity and how cultural diversity translates into many facets of schooling. (Contains 57 references.) (LL)

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Preparing Preservice Teachers for the Multicultural Classroom: A Report on the Case Study Approach

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Preparing Preservice Teachers for the Multicultural Classroom:

A Report on the Case Study Approach

By the year 2000, most schools will have substantial minority, low income, and handicapped populations, while over 95 percent of the teaching population will consist of white, middle class, female teachers (Howey & Zimpher, 1989). Consequently, many researchers and scholars in the field of teacher education have called for a teacher education curriculum that promotes multicultural awareness and acceptance (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1973; Ornstein & Levine, 1989; Gay, 1983; Grant, 1983; Banks, 1977; 1981; and Baker, 1977).

Simultaneous to the calls for multicultural teacher education, a new pedagogy in teacher education derived from the well-established tradition in business, medical, and law education termed the case study approach has emerged (e.g. Christensen, 1987). The case study approach or method can be defined as an instructional technique whereby the major ingredients of a problematic teaching situation are presented in narrative form to preservice teachers for the purposes of problem solving (Kowalski, Weaver, & Henson, 1990). Although noted scholars have advocated the infusion of the case study method into the preparation of preservice teacher coursework (Doyle, 1990; Shulman, 1987), the use of the case study approach in teacher education pedagogy is still in its infancy, with little reported research documenting its use or impact (Scott, 1991).

This study was designed to combine the voices of advocates for a multicultural teacher education curriculum with the voices of advocates for the case study method in order to explore the possibilities of addressing multicultural issues in preservice teacher education coursework through the case study method. In order to explore the possibility of the case study method as a tool to help prepare preservice teachers for the multicultural classroom, the researchers focused on one case for inclusion in the preservice teacher education curriculum that addressed the needs of a fourth grade bilingual boy labeled learning disabled. The results of this study provide insights into how preservice teachers might begin to make sense of diversity through the discussion of a case study. One assertion constituting grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was generated from this study on the use of the case study approach. Following discussion of the theoretical framework, context, methods and procedures of this study, this assertion is reported along with supporting data and conclusions and implications.

Theoretical Framework: Teacher Education and The Case Study Approach

There has been a move away from the technical approach to teacher education to the recognition that teaching is complex and uncertain. In the past, experienced-based teacher education programs assumed that once preservice teachers had successfully completed a number of courses in a particular scope and sequence framework, along with student teaching, they were prepared to teach. Alternatives to this model, known as either competency-based programs or performance-based programs, assumed that a certain number of behaviors were necessary for teaching to be effective and that teachers should be able to demonstrate that they could perform these behaviors prior to teaching (Richardson, 1990). Critics felt that these teacher education programs were too technical and were deeply rooted in a positivist paradigm. Doyle (1977) pointed out that this positivist paradigm did not allow preservice teachers to take into account the classroom history, context, fellow teachers, or students in the learning to teach process.

These types of teacher education approaches were followed by a different way to look at teaching, the teacher as a thinker or decision maker. Decisions were reached through a series of steps including selecting a behavioral objective, studying various alternative approaches to reaching the behavioral objective and, finally, selecting and implementing the appropriate procedure (Tyler, 1950). Although this approach on the surface appeared to be a departure from a technical approach

to teacher education, it was seen as linear, since it supplied teachers with one way of thinking about teaching and making decisions with an accompanying language for the analysis of teaching. The movement away from this model, influenced by Donald Schon's book The Reflective Practitioner, brought about another way to look at teaching, the teacher as reflective practitioner.

Schon saw teaching not from a knowledge base but from the teacher's "appreciation system." This system was comprised of the teacher's repertoire of values, knowledge, theories and practices that influenced how situations were perceived, what was noticed in these situations, and the kinds of decisions and questions teachers would form about particular actions. With Schon's concept of "knowledge-in-action," intuitive thinking was seen as valid and knowledge was inherent in action. Also, his idea of "reflection-in action" acknowledged the teacher's ability to define a problematic situation, name what should be attended to, and frame the context in which to attend to these issues.

The recent recognition by teacher educators that teaching is a complex, situation-specific, and dilemma-ridden endeavor has brought about the acknowledgment of the crucial role of thought and reflection in professional development as evidenced by the calls for "reflective teacher education." Dewey first proposed in 1933 that educators be reflective thinkers. Dewey defined this as a type of thinking that considers options and reasons before choosing a course of action or adopting a belief (Dewey, 1933). Sparks-Langer and Colton (1991) state that "professional knowledge is seen as coming from sources outside the teacher and from the teachers' own interpretations of their everyday experience" (p. 7). Clark (1986) has stated that the teacher should now be conceptualized as a professional "sense-making" constructivist, developing and testing personal theories of the world around him/her.

Freie (1987) observes that by the time students reach college, they have accepted a general world view, and they tend to screen out what might be threatening alternatives and let in only information that is friendly to their previous views. This acknowledgment of students holding on to their previous views calls for a closer look at how college students learn and what educational methods would facilitate reflective thinking, especially on the part of preservice teachers.

The literature suggests that in order to facilitate reflective thinking, a learning environment that is problem-posing, dialogical, and empowering for students is needed (Floyd & Scott, 1991; Selman, 1989; O'Loughlin, 1988). Posing real-life problems confronts students with the complexity of the real world causing them to reflect on their beliefs and learning. Once students are clear about what beliefs and values are guiding them, they can examine the grounds on which these beliefs and values are held. If, under scrutiny, the beliefs and values still appear to be valid, the students can call on these beliefs and values as part of their reasoning and argument (O'Loughlin, 1988). A class format that offers a social context for clarifying information, reflecting on diverse viewpoints, and evaluating alternatives, forces students to analyze and organize their ideas in order to communicate with peers (Wheatley, 1990). The value of dialogue focused on problematic situations is well supported by research on the development of moral thinking (Kohlberg, Levine, & Hewer, 1985; Oser, 1986). When given the opportunity to consider conflicting evidence and perspectives differing from their own, students may experience disequilibrium and be open to intellectual risk-taking (Haste, 1987; Perry, 1970). The case study approach holds promise for facilitating this type of environment.

Floyd (1992) reported the establishment of the kind of environment described above using the case study method. Preservice teachers were confronted with problematic situations which arise in teaching. These situations were embedded contextually, and there was no one right answer. The format allowed prospective teachers to define problems, identify alternatives, choose a course of action and a plan for implementation, and consider the possible consequences of a given action. The results of the study showed that the preservice teachers constructed multiple perspectives, considered contextual factors in decision-making, and acknowledged and examined

beliefs about teaching and learning (Floyd, 1992). The case study approach was found to facilitate the social construction of knowledge about teaching and learning.

There now exists a number of case studies that deal with issues from a multicultural perspective (Kleinfeld, 1990; Shulman & Mesa-Bains, 1990). Judith Kleinfeld notes the need for beginning teachers to appreciate and respect minority cultures and to be prepared to enter a complex and foreign environment. The case study method has the potential "to increase teachers' sensitivity about peopie who are different from themselves as well as to encourage them to examine their own feelings and values" (Scott, 1991, p. 10). Case studies have the power to evoke vicarious experiences in the preservice teachers. While there is an increase in the number of case study books now being published for use in teacher education, few studies exist on particular cases and how those cases may "play out" in teacher education settings.

Context of the Study

To examine how preservice teachers make sense of diversity through the discussion of a case study, one case was presented and discussed with four classes of 20 to 30 preservice teachers in two consecutive semesters during the 1991-1992 academic year. The class in which the case was incorporated was a four credit seminar class taken concurrently with student teaching. The purpose of the class was to build on the students' experience by creating opportunities for students to broaden their perspectives on teaching through reflection and inquiry about teaching and its contexts. Among the topics included in the course were classroom organization and management, students with special needs, child abuse, professional ethics, stress management, and creating a professional portfolio. The class met seven full days during the semester from 8:30 a.m—4:00 a.m. On the days that classes met, preservice teachers did not report to their student teaching placements.

The class was organized as a cooperative learning environment where the instructor emphasized verbalization, interaction, and reflection. The prospective teachers were organized into base groups each comprised of 4-5 prospective teachers from a cross-section of grade levels and schools according to internship placement. The instructor organized these base groups to work cooperatively to examine cases that correlated with the day's topic (Johnson & Johnson, 1984). It was her belief that knowledge is a social construction as well as an individual understanding (Bruner, 1989; Greeno, 1989).

The case selected for the purposes of this study was entitled "The Case of Joan Martin, Marilyn Coe, and Warren Groves." This case is summarized by its authors in the following way:

> Conflict arises when a classroom teacher, a special education teacher, and an elementary school principal hold different views about mainstreaming a boy into a fourth grade social studies class (Silverman, Welty, & Lyon, 1992, p. 155).

This particular case was selected for three reasons. First, the case describes the child as learning disabled. Therefore, the case corresponded with the class's focus that day on special needs children, and therefore integrated well into the content of the course. Second, the case contained contextual information regarding the child's cultural background:

> Donald Garcia, a 9-year-old, had spent two years in the self-contained LD class. He was an only child, living with his mother and father . . . . The Committee on Special Education report noted that Donald's mother, whose native language was Spanish, spoke English with some difficulty. Donald understood but did not speak Spanish (Silverman, Welty, & Lyon, 1992, p. 160).

Finally, the case was selected for its high correlation with the reality of teaching in the State of Florida, where over 90 percent of the preservice teachers wished to secure their first teaching job. By the year 2000, Spanish speaking students will predominate in Florida. In this way, "The Case of Joan Martin, Marilyn Coe, and Warren Groves" was judged well written as Lawrence (1953) states:

> A good case is the vehicle by which a chunk of reality is brought into the classroom to be worked over by the class and the instructor. A good case keeps the class discussion grounded upon some of the stubborn facts that must be faced up to in real-life situations. It is the anchor on academic flights of speculation. It is the record of complex situations that must be literally pulled apart and put together again before the situations can be understood (p. 215).

The case was presented in all four classes following a similar protocol. First, the instructor read the case aloud to the students. Next, the preservice teachers were asked to record their reactions to the case individually. After a period of approximately 10 minutes for students to write individually, each base group was instructed to create concept maps (Novak & Gowin, 1984) based on the relationships of the characters in the case. Constructing concept maps allowed a visual representation of how the characters or players in the case all connected to one another, and also allowed the facts about each character to be recorded so this information could be used in a subsequent role play. Following construction of the concept map, members were instructed to role play the meeting between the principal and the two teachers within each base group, bringing to life the multiple perspectives of the adult characters who were the main focus of this case. Role playing was then conducted by two sets of players in front of the total class with discussion following. After large group discussion, students returned to their original written reflections to record any additional thoughts about the case. The entire process took approximately two hours.

Methods, Data Sources, and Analysis

The methods employed in this research project were interpretive (Erickson, 1986), that is, they involved the collection and interpretation of qualitative data through participant observation, tape recordings and transcriptions of small and large group classroom discussions of the case, and document analysis of pre-and post-case discussion reflections written by the students in the class. To provide consistency in the teaching of the case, one of the researchers taught the case each time it was presented while the other researcher took field notes during the presentation and discussion of the case. In addition, the two researchers kept separate journals to enter observers' comments and interpretations (Bogdan & Bicklen, 1982) following each participant observation session. To provide an additional source of visual data, one class session was video-taped in addition to being audio tape recorded and transcribed. The multiple sources of data were employed to triangulate findings. Triangulation, a tool basic to ethnographic research, serves as "the heart of ethnographic validity, testing one source of information against another to strip away alternative explanations and prove a hypotheses" (Fetterman, 1989, p. 89).

Data analysis consisted of many readings of field notes, transcriptions of class discussions, and students' pre-and post-case study discussion reflections. During readings, patterns in the data were sought (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As patterns emerged, we conducted systematic searches of the data, looking for disconfirming and confirming evidence to support the themes that emerged (Erickson, 1986).

A constructivist epistemology (Bruner, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978) was embodied into the collection and interpretation of data. Constructivists view learning as an interpretive process in which individuals engage in unique constructions of knowledge as they make sense of their experiences. Hence, particular attention was given to the sense-making process in which preservice teachers engage as they discuss the problems encountered in the case study. General questions that guided data collection and analysis included: (a) In what ways do preservice

teachers make sense of the problematic situation described in the case study? What referents do they use to make decisions about the characters and how they would behave in similar circumstances? (b) How do preservice teachers make meaning of the concept of diversity during conversations with peers regarding a case? And, (c) Whose perspective do the preservice teachers use to make sense of the problem encountered in the case study? Do changes in perspective occur as a result of case study discussion with peers? One assertion that addresses these general questions is reported in the following section of this paper.

Assertion:

During case study discussions that address the issue of diversity, dynamic tensions between competing perspectives of the key players in the case may surface. Tensions between competing perspectives may lead preservice teachers to question aspects of teaching and learning that were previously taken for granted.

After the initial reading of the case, students were asked to write their reflections and thoughts on the key aspects of the situation before they began small group discussion. In the initial reflections, many preservice teachers articulated a frustration as they considered the multiple perspectives of the key players in the case. One student wrote:

> This is definitely a difficult situation. On the one hand, we have a person wanting to mainstream a child, even though his reading skills are below level, so that he can experience life with his peers. Then there is the classroom teacher, who has a class full of students she is responsible for, and she has set high goals for them—goals that Donald does not seem able to achieve. And then there is the principal who is caught in the middle, not wanting either teacher to "look bad," and trying to keep the peace. I find myself torn between the child's need to be with his peers and the teacher's need to teach an entire class .... At this moment, I could compare Donald to myself. I feel lost and confused in this case, much as Donald must feel. (Student pre-discussion reflection, October, 1991)

While many students articulated an initial frustration with competing perspectives discussed in the case, other students identified multiple perspectives but went on to discuss who was to blame for the situation and which character's "side" they were on:

> I can see both the classroom teacher's and the special education teachers' points of view on why Donald should or shouldn't be mainstreamed .... I feel that the principal is the cause of this problem. I realize that teachers need to make their own decision but when they asked the principal about mainstreaming, he gives wishy-washy answers. (Student pre-discussion reflection, October, 1991)

> I suppose it would be much easier to draw some conclusion about Donald if we had been given just a single point of view. However, the presentation of three points of view forces us to consider a solution for the all around result. I mostly relate to the classroom teacher, though. I understand her frustration. I feel I am in the midst of a similar experience in my internship and I find myself asking, "How can I cater to all of one child's special needs without distracting from the other students' learning?" I agree with Joan Martin (the classroom teacher). (Student pre-discussion reflection, February, 1992)

When preservice teachers were given the opportunity to make sense of competing perspectives in small group discussion and role play, preservice teachers realized that the perspectives of each of the "adult" players had been articulated, analyzed and discussed. Yet, there was a missing perspective in the case—that of the child. This is exemplified in one student's comments that occurred before a role play was enacted in front of the entire class:

> (Speaking of role play) Everybody's talking about Donald like he's an object, nobody is asking him what he feels or thinks. (Class Discussion Audio tape transcription, October 2, 1991)

This comment, or a similar one made by students each time this case was discussed, perplexed the preservice teachers. Many preservice teachers expressed regret and remorse as they realized that they had taken the perspective of the child for granted:

> My first concerns about the case dealt mainly with the two teachers that are involved. After interning for several weeks now, I realize the lack of time available throughout the school day, and so I sympathized with the classroom teacher in that she cannot take extra time to "tutor" Donald. I also sympathized with the special education teacher in that she is working hard and trying to do the best for her LD students. But what really disturbs me is that my thoughts about Donald were last instead of first. After discussing the case, I realize that we are talking about Donald here—a young, pleasant boy who is having problems with his learning. (Student post discussion reflection, February, 1992)

> My thoughts about the case as it was presented at the beginning of class were neither here nor there. I was unconcerned about Donald's well being and sympathized with the teachers. After the discussion of the case my thoughts and feelings did a 180 degree turn! . . . The two teachers need to understand that Donald comes first in any decision they choose to make. (Student post discussion reflection, February, 1992)

Thus, through role play and small group discussion, students recognized that often the perspective of the child is hidden and/or lost as the adults in schools discuss and debate "what is best for children." This realization greatly disturbed the prospective teachers as they contemplated how many times they had thought of themselves or their own perspective without taking into account that of the child's. Preservice teachers articulated an awareness that their own perspectives on a situation may dominate how they approach solving any teaching dilemma. According to one preservice teacher:

> I have learned as a result of this case that there are many perspectives to any problem. It's not like I didn't know that before, but to actually experience seeing the different perspectives in action brought it to life. I realize now how my perspectives affect my decisions as a teacher. (Student post-discussion reflection, February, 1992)

Understanding that Donald's perspective had been taken for granted led preservice teachers to further examine the data that was presented in the case regarding Donald. Prior to class discussion, most preservice teachers used the label "learning disabled" that was assigned to Donald to make sense of how Donald was experiencing school. Yet, through small group and large group discussion of the case, preservice teachers came to understand that the label Donald was assigned so dominated their thinking that they were blinded by cultural and contextual factors that related to the case. This assertion is best exemplified by one student's contribution to the discussion that caused the prospective teachers to acknowledge and examine their own prejudices. While students now acknowledged the need to find out what the child, Donald, felt and thought about being mainstreamed, one student took issue with the special education label which had been placed on Donald. When this point was brought out in the large group discussion, the decision was not whether or not to mainstream this child, but whether or not this child was actually learning disabled:

> The cultural difference of the child, that has been totally taken for granted in the situation . . . . This child may not necessarily be learning disabled. He just knows how to learn but from a different language. (Large Group Discussion, February, 1992)

The prospective teachers carefully searched the case for evidence that led this one student to even express that opinion, and they found that there was enough evidence within the context of the case to make this a legitimate question. English was the second language of the student's mother, and she spoke this with some difficulty. The mother's native language was Spanish. Donald, the student, understood but did not speak Spanish. Donald had traveled with his parents several times to South America and could relate those trips to other experiences. In addition, Donald understood concepts on his age and grade level, and he had very good listening comprehension skills.

The cultural background of this student was now put forth as the issue. Each time this case was discussed, all but one or two preservice teachers accepted Donald's learning disabled label without question. This incident caused the prospective teachers to be more conscious of possible ignorance when reading cases in the future and to question issues that they normally would accept without question:

> My opinion about this case study definitely changed as we discussed it in our groups. At first, I thought that it was unfair to Donald as well as the teachers to keep him in the regular classroom. But as we talked about the case, I realized a lot more! After our discussion, I really believe Donald may not be LD. He is facing many cultural differences! I hadn't considered this before our discussion. (Student post discussion reflection, February, 1992)

In addition, the reflections written about this incident and about not knowing to question the child's learning disabled label communicated a sense of humility and regret:

> What was most interesting was that when our group talked . . . we never questioned whether Donald was really LD or not, which is sad. (Student Reflection, February, 1992)

Finally, prospective teachers expressed a heightened awareness of cultural factors in relation to a child's experience in school and in many cases, expressed a willingness to continue to contemplate cultural diversity and what it means for the teaching and learning situation.

> Donald is at school to be taught as well as socialized into the culture and society. Yet, both teachers are aware of Donald's history, but haven't given it a second thought . . . . (It's important to recognize) language and cultural differences. Just think about yourself trying to read a note a child's written in "street slang". . . . Are you LD there? Language/cultural barriers should be acknowledged. (Student post-discussion reflection, February, 1992)

> I hadn't really thought about the issue of Donald <u>not</u> being LD until it was brought up in our class discussion. It is a very interesting point. I bet a lot could be discovered through exploring a child's cultural background. . . . (In Donald's case), maybe progress could be made in a bilingual class. Perhaps he could understand things better if he heard them in Spanish. More avenues that take into account cultural diversity need to be explored. I will keep this in mind as I face "Donalds" in my teaching career. (Student post-discussion reflection, February, 1992)

<u>Implications/Conclusion</u>

Our research on "The Case of Joan Martin, Marilyn Coe, and Warren Groves" indicates that case studies may provide an opportunity for preservice teachers to examine their beliefs regarding diversity. Preservice teachers utilize the beliefs articulated during case study discussion to examine and critically reflect on their actions and practices as teachers. The discussion of a case with peers may serve to create the opportunity for preservice teachers to begin to understand their own subjectivities and biases and how those subjectivities and biases affect how they perceive teaching and learning situations. This, in turn, may lead to a heightened sensitivity toward cultural diversity and how cultural diversity translates into the many facets of schooling.

Other suggestions as to how preservice teachers might become aware of and understand how their subjectivities and biases affect their perceptions of teaching and learning situations have been made by educational researchers and theorists (see, for example, Benson & Floyd, 1992; Dana, 1991; Fuller & Ahler, 1987; Mahan & Stachowski, 1990; Marshall & Sears, 1991; Santos, 1986). Although additional research on specific strategies teacher educators might employ to help preservice teachers develop an understanding of other cultures is needed, it is apparent that teacher educators need to employ these strategies not within a course offered on multicultural education, but infused throughout all coursework in a teacher preparation program. Because teaching cases are complex stories, cases have the ability to connect topics covered in courses (such as "students with special needs" in this study) with issues of diversity. Therefore, the use of the case study approach offers promise to address issues of diversity throughout all coursework in the teacher preparation program.

For this purpose, there exists a need for more cases which have the potential to address issues of diversity and a database to increase teacher educators' access to appropriate cases. Although McGraw-Hill, Incorporated is presently offering a catalogue of cases whereby teacher educators can select particular cases to have a tailored casebook printed for specific teaching needs (Silverman & Welty, 1993), the selection is greatly limited and restricted to cases written by these authors. Easy access to a variety of quality written case studies from which teacher educators can choose is not readily available. For the case method to be implemented as a pedagogical approach to teacher education, teachers and teacher educators/researchers (such as Shulman, 1991 and Kleinfeld, 1992) must continue to engage in documenting teaching practices and the writing of cases to add to the limited number of cases presently readily available to teacher educators.

Teacher educators who have involved their preservice teachers in the writing and subsequent discussion of these cases have reported that students may be motivated to talk more freely about sensitive issues that are generally too personal to discuss (Shulman, 1991). Floyd (1992) reports that cases may bring out hidden feelings and prejudices, a Pandora's box so to speak. The results of this study further support the work of Shulman and Floyd and suggest that teacher educators may need to prepare themselves to deal with sensitive issues which arise in order to facilitate preservice teachers' understandings of these feelings and prejudices. As reported in this study, students articulated a sense of humility and regret as hidden feelings surfaced through discussion of this case. Further long-term investigation of how the surfacing of these feeling affect students both emotionally (in their private lives) and professionally (in their actions as teachers) is needed.

In addition, teacher educators must become aware of their own personal hidden feelings and prejudices, and how these may affect the teaching of a case (Shulman, 1992). While an analysis of the instructor's thoughts and actions were beyond the scope of this study, further research on the thinking processes of the instructor teaching the case may give insights into how teacher educators make sense of and subsequently deal with teaching diversity. The authors of this paper are presently studying data collected as they engaged in a collaborative action research project on their own practices as teacher educators in relation to the case study approach. We have learned from the teaching and study of "The case of Joan Martin, Marilyn Coe, and Warren Groves" that as we ask prospective teachers to reflect on their thinking about a case, we must look in the mirror ourselves.

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